Flying Snake

A Journal of
Cryptozoology, Folklore and Forteana

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Forteana from Dutch Fortean Loes Modderman · Egg inside an egg · Sea Serpents of Australia and New Zealand · Chipmunks in Britain · Warned by a dream · History of the Panda . Deer at Sea · The Stonehenge Bird .

FLYING SNAKE SUBSCRIPTION AND GUIDELINES

Established by Richard Muirhead aka Dr Devo in 2011

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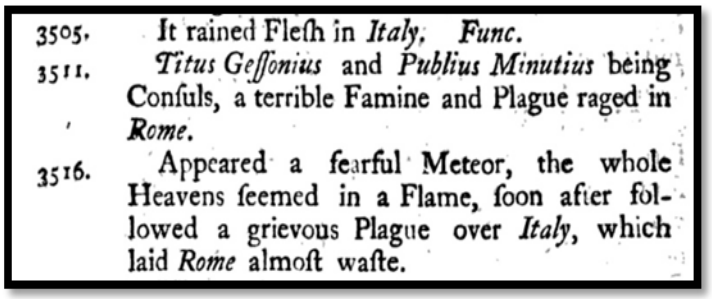
Dr Devo`s Diary

"For I pray God for the introduction of new creatures into this is-land. For I pray God for the ostriches of Salisbury Plain, the bea-vers of the Medway and silver fish of Thames." *Christopher Smart `Rejoice in the Lamb`. Poet, naturalist, lunatic (1722-1771)*

First of all I must start this issue`s Dr Devo`s Diary by offering a sincere apology to Javier Resines whose essay on I seriously messed up in issue 16 of Flying Snake, getting text and images mixed up from two distinct essay`s of his, also I forgot to send Jon Downes of the Centre for Fortean Zoology Javier`s contribution to the CFZ 2020 Yearbook which is not quite published as I write this in early March. What is going on of course is the coronavirus Covid-19 which so far is out of control and ravaging the planet. If I have to self-quarantine I have about 100 years of books to read which I haven`t yet read, by which time I will either be 153 years old or have shuffled off this mortal coil!! I hope you enjoy this issue, I have tried to include a wide range of interesting stories for you. One extraordinary side effect of this virus crisis has been the tentative re-claiming of urban space by birds and beasts of various species. Feral goats have been seen in the town of Llandudno,Wales, a flock of goats was seen passing through a Turkish town, more and more humans have begun to both hear and appreciate bird song. Talking of birds, my Mystery Bird Reports Facebook page is doing very well, I have about half a dozen people asking to join it per week. As of today(June 3rd 2020 the 27th anniversary of my father`s death) I have 413 members. Please feel free to join if you want to; the word "Mystery" should be interpreted very broadly, as long as it`s interesting and non-sexist I will accept it. By sexist I mean women are human not "birds"! In non Fortean news my brother Tom kindly made a web-site for me for my house history research business Your House History Book. It can be found at:https://househistorybook.co.uk/?

VOMITING VULTURES and other Forteana by Loes Modderman



3505. It rained Fleſh in *Italy*. *Func.*
3511. *Titus Geſſonius* and *Publius Minutius* being Conſuls, a terrible Famine and Plague raged in *Rome*.
3516. Appeared a fearful Meteor, the whole Heavens ſeemed in a Flame, ſoon after followed a grievous Plague over *Italy*, which laid *Rome* almoſt waſte.

Thinking about a subject for this article, I happened upon a list of mishaps in the remarkable chronicle of Thomas Short, *A General Chronological History of the Air, Weather, Seasons, etc*. (1749) The title is a whole bit longer. Short, who starts his Chronicle with the Creation of the World has arrived in the year 3505 AM (*Anno Mundi*, Year of the World, which is the year 499 BCE) telling us about a 'flesh rain' in Italy. Even in days long gone by a rain of flesh happened.

A bit more recent, Pliny the Elder (23-79 CE), in his *Historia Naturalis*, Book II, Ch LVI, talks about 'many times it rained flesh' , "*which, when vultures didn't eat it, never putrified."* He also mentions other rains, like blood and wool and iron and even tiles and bricks, substances normally not to be found in the air.A bit later, in 458 CE, a flesh rain fell in Italy in 'big and little chunks' according to Ambroise Paré (1510-1590), who cited the Roman Julius Obsequens in his book *'On Monsters and Marvels'*. Italy seems to be preferred by whoever needs to shed his superfluous tissue. Paré also mentions that the flesh didn't change it's odour or spoiled in time.But not only Italy was the chosen target.
In 1869, for three minutes a shower of flesh and blood fell from the sky onto a farm in Los Nietos, California. Several acres were covered. Charles Fort, master anomalist, elaborates on this one in 'Lo'. He says: *"The conventional explanation is that these substances had been disgorged by flying buzzards. The day was perfectly clear, and the sun was shining, and there was no perceptable breeze, and if anybody saw buzzards, buzzards were not mentioned."*
The papers of that day made mention of 'short fine hairs' on the flesh. About two months earlier blood and flesh had fallen from the sky in Santa Clara County, also California.An article in *Fortean Times* 271

by John Hairr, Febr 2011 gives us the first documented Californian fleshfall, in 1851, when chunks of the substance pelted down upon soldiers at a military post in Benicia. Not a few pieces; small and large ones over an area of about 5 acres. The only particular of the weather was a strong westerly breeze. Nothing else. No birds. The next fall in California was in 1863.Near Lebanon,Tennessee,there had been one in 1841,and that one was studied by many experts around the country. Workers in the field saw a red cloud from which the bloody mass came down on the tobacco plants said *The American Journal of Science.*

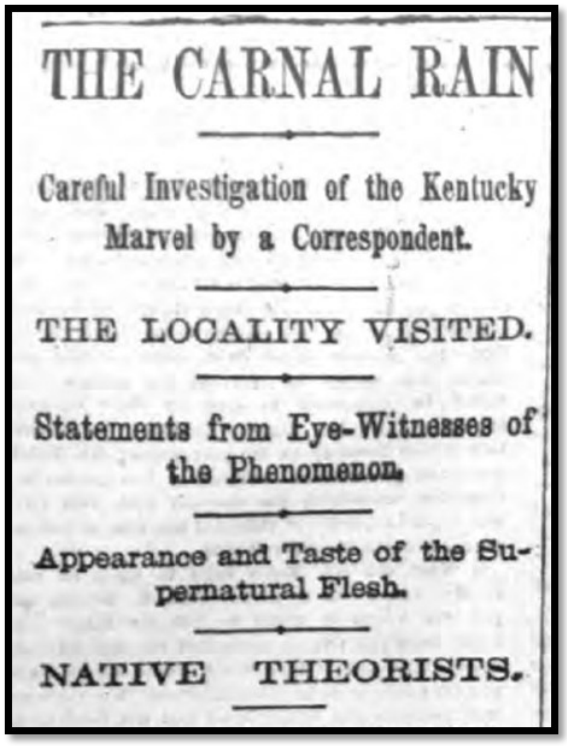
EXTRAORDINARY PHENOMENON: SHOWER OF FLESH AND BLOOD.

We extract from the *Fayettville Carolinian*, of March 9th, the following paragraph relative to a phenomenon recently witnessed in North Carolina:—"We received on Wednesday the following communication from Mr. Clarkson, through Mr. Holland, of Clinton, and take great pleasure in laying the astonishing particulars before our readers:—'On the 15th February, 1850, there fell within 100 yards of the residence of Thomas M. Clarkson, in Sampson county, a shower of flesh and blood about 30 feet wide, and, as far as it was traced, about 250 or 300 yards in length. The pieces appeared to be flesh, liver, lights, brains, and blood. Some of the blood ran on the leaves, apparently very fresh. Three of his (T. M. C.'s) children were in it, and ran to their mother, exclaiming, 'Mother, there is meat falling!'

Around the same time, in 1850, North Carolina was the target of the meat throwers. Here part of the article from *The Courier*, Tasmania, 27 July 1850.

Charles Fort mentions several more flesh falls. In *'The Book of the Damned'* he gives us a (probably) flesh downpour from the annals of the *French Academy*, on March 1669.
In another place of the same book he goes into blood rains, an event that seems to happen a lot. Tongue in cheek he suggests that maybe *"a super dragon, far from this earth, has rammed a comet, and bled."*

In another place of the same book he goes into blood rains, an event that seems to happen a lot. Tongue in cheek he suggests that maybe *"a super dragon, far from this earth, has rammed a comet, and bled."*
Says Fort: *"....that our whole solar system is a living thing: that showers of blood upon this earth are its internal heamorrhages - Or vast living things in the sky, as there are vast living things in the oceans - Or some one especial thing: an especial time: an especial place. A thing the size of Brooklyn Bridge - something the size of Central Park kills it - I drips."*
A year after the fall in Los Nietos, in 1870, a gory fall took place near Juapa in Riverside County. Huge chunks of what seemed coagulated bloodclots came down from a perfectly clear sky. It happened suddenly: not a cloud to be seen, and then a whirlwind arose No birds.



THE CARNAL RAIN

Careful Investigation of the Kentucky Marvel by a Correspondent.

THE LOCALITY VISITED.

Statements from Eye-Witnesses of the Phenomenon.

Appearance and Taste of the Supernatural Flesh.

NATIVE THEORISTS.

Again almost a year later, in 1871 , a flesh fall took place in the Californian San Gabriel Valley, 13 miles from Los Angeles. This time the the meat seemed to be cooked instead of raw

FLESH DESCENDING IN A SHOWER.

AN ASTOUNDING PHENOMENON IN KENTUCKY—FRESH MEAT LIKE MUTTON OR VENISON FALLING FROM A CLEAR SKY.

Special Dispatch to the New-York Times.

LOUISVILLE, March 9.—The Bath County (Ky.) *News* of this date says: "On last Friday a shower of meat fell near the house of Allen Crouch, who lives some two or three miles from the Olympian Springs in the southern portion of the county, covering a strip of ground about one hundred yards in length and fifty wide. Mrs. Crouch was out in the yard at the time, engaged in making soap, when meat which looked like beef began *to fall around her. The sky* was perfectly clear at the time, and she said it fell like large snow flakes, the pieces as a general thing not being much larger. One piece fell near her which was three or four inches square. Mr. Harrison Gill, whose veracity is unquestionable, and from whom we obtained the above facts, hearing of the occurrence visited the locality the next day, and says he saw particles of meat sticking to the fences and scattered over the ground. The meat when it first fell appeared to be perfectly fresh.

The correspondent of the Louisville *Commercial*, writing from Mount Sterling, corroborates the above, and says the pieces of flesh were of various sizes and shapes, some of them being two inches square. Two gentlemen, who tasted the meat, express the opinion that it was either mutton or venison.

The New York Times
Published: March 10, 1876
Copyright © The New York Times

The most widely published flesh fall though seems to be the one in Kentucky, in 1876. Some of the chunks were preserved in a bottle. Others were sent to scientists all over the country for research. I found a really large article in the *New York Herald*, March 21, 1876, where witnesses were questioned about their bizarre experience

People were very creative in explaining what they saw: one man thought the meat had come from a lunch basket from a passing balloonist. That sportsman must have been a meat lover, for the amount of flesh he dropped could have filled a cart. No balloon in sight. No birds either. Of course one came up with the usual buzzards who suddenly felt the need to gorge themselves, although birds of prey like buzzards are not in the habit of transporting chunks of flesh, but rather small animals they will eat when they land on the nest or elsewhere, where they can eat in peace. We're not talking large vultures here.
And what's more: decent buzzards don't fly in flocks. Starlings do, not buzzards.
People tasted the pieces of meat, but there was no consensis on the origin. Some thought is was mutton. Others went for horse. Or deer. One came up with child, and how he could have thought that we won't ask.
Then there was a professor Lawrence Smith, who ventilated the magnificent explanation that it was dried frogspawn. How that could be mixed up with beef is another question.

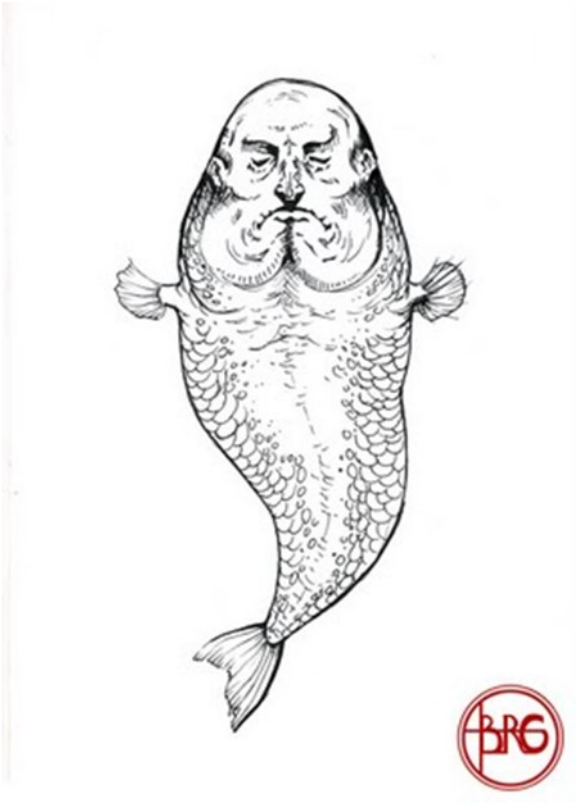
In 1884 there was a bloodrain on the land of Mr Lasater, Chatham County, Georgia, from a clear sky.
A Professor Venable said it was blood, but he couldn't say from which animal.
Then, in 1890, in Calabria, which appeared to be birdblood. So one of the illuminaries of science speculated that birds were torn in pieces by strong winds. And plucked from their feathers. But no birds came down, or feathers or feet or wings or beak. Just meat.

The most recent (?) was a flesh rain in 1968, in Brazil. On 27 of August a gory rain that lasted 5 minutes fell on an area of a square km, between Cocpava and Sao Jose dos Campos.
It was published in Brazilian papers and in *Flying Saucer Review* of Nov 1968.

So now: what is this? And is it any different form the 'normal' rains of fishes and frogs?
Yes: buzzards never get the blame when fishes or frogs fall from the sky;
they are exclusively blamed for collectively polluting the landscape with the product of their digestic system.
What else?The difference between meat rains and, say, hay, or even frogs is that meat falling from a clear blue sky is decidedly creepy. Real creepy. For where does it come from? What was it when it could still walk?
We, in our days, may silently make a connection with the never solved riddle of cattle mutilations.
Are aliens responsible then?
Do they harvest (parts of) animals, keep them for research or, godhelpus, for food, and once in a while an invisible UFO opens its belly and puts the garbage out? Dropping frogs, or birds or grain or fish or any of all the many substances that regularly rain on flabbergasted civilians?
Or do we for some reason sometimes touch another dimension, where they are all too happy to get rid of their superfluous meterials?
Or are there, like Fort suggested, huge animals in the sky that are responsible for the carnage?

That last option would also shed some light on the many instances when whole flocks of birds come down and die, without any cause we know of. They could have been hunted, and fled.

One thing we know for sure at least: the poor flocks of vomiting buzzards are innocent. Totally.
So the only thing we can repeat, after Fort: *The fate of all explanation is to close one door only to have another fly wide open*.
And that other, more ominous quote: *"I think we are property.* "



Above and on the following page—The Man Fish

WONDERFUL ACCOUNT OF A MAN-FISH

Alexander of Alexandria, and above fifty other historians, have written an account of a man named Collas, whom they call the Fish Collas. This man had accustomed himself from his infancy to the frequenting of the sea, till at last he became an inhabitant thereof, and dwelt there with fish obstinate delight, that he would not be persuaded from it, so that at length he became viscous and waterish, and continued in the sea the greatest part of his life, being sometimes hidden betwixt two waves like a fish, so that he could not be seen for five or six hours together, and would seldom come out in less than eight or ten days, but when he saw a ship he would sometimes go aboard, and live with the mariners for some time, and when tired he would throw himself overboard into the sea and be gone. He said that when he was on shore, he used to be troubled with pain in the stomach, which he had not when in the water.

uit: *The New Wonderful Magazine* vol 1, blz 95

Shower Of Coke

The following is testimony from the Bournemouth Meteorological Registrar:

"After the severe thunderstorm of 5 June 1983, it was brought to my attention that large amounts of coke had fallen in a gentleman's garden. After being reported in the local press and on local radio that evening, my telephone never stopped ringing with reports of coke haven fallen all over the Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch area. I investigated several reports and found the pieces to be the same, all having been discovered over lawns, paths, etc. and all found after the storms of the 5th.

At one lady's house I picked up 92 pieces of coke and there were still many pieces left. The largest piece of coke measured 6.0 cm by 4.6 cm. At one investigation I was given small roof-like stone chippings which the lady said she saw in melting hailstones." Rogers, P.A.; "Remarkable Shower of Coke from Cumulonimbus," *Journal of Meteorology, U.K.*, 9:220, 1984.) From Science Frontiers #37, JAN-FEB 1985. © 1985-2000 William R. Corliss

THE GORILLA - DOES IT EXIST?

This is the title of a chapter in the book *'Sea and Land'* by **James William Buel** (1849-1920). The book of 800 pages was published in 1887, in times when the knowledge of many tropical animals was brought to the West by explorers who were courageous enough to risk their lives in remote places, hacking and shooting, for nature in general and the jungle in particular was the enemy of civilization.

Buel is very pre-occupied with the above question. His book is a systematic treatise on the dangers of nature, the 'ferocious animals' in the past and present, and the human methods of effectively dealing with those dangers, by killing the beasts. About 300 engravings enlighten the reader how that was done.

Chapter XXXIII is about primates. The existence of the orang utan had been confirmed since the 17th century. Living specimens entertained the public in appalling cramped accomodations in the oldest Zoo's of the 19th and 20th century and their remains entertained scientists and the public alike. The identity of a newly discovered ape, especially when there was no life specimen available, could be a reason for discussion.

So it was with the gorilla.

I'll cite from Buel's book. Buel himself was far from sure if something like the gorilla really existed, even when by the end of the 19th century most zoologists seemed to accept there was such a creature.

Buel starts mentioning the unicorn, of all animals, *"which, many years ago, was fiercely debated by every learned person in Europe. It has at length been settled that the gorilla is a reality, while the unicorn is a myth, but there are not wanting persons who, if not still openly disputing the claim, do entertain grave doubts as to the existence of the gorilla, and the reasons for so believing are not without some force. It is a most astonishing fact that the only African traveler who so much as pretends to have seen the creature, or even to have heard of it through the wild tribes of that country, is Paul B. Du Chaillu."*

The well known French explorer **Paul Belloni Du Chaillu** (1831-1903) had been making waves in those days. One gets the impression that Buel didn't like Du Chaillu much, but he doesn't tell us his exact reasons. One of those could have been racism. The explorer had a mother of mixed blood, something very inconvenient in the scientific community, which was exclusively white and male. An internet article of Richard Conniff *, Race, Sex and the Trials of a Young Explorer* http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/02/13/race-sex-and-the-trials-a-young-explorer/?_r=0 has more to say about this issue.

The main thing why the gorilla was such a hot item was Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859). Public imagination was stirred and often infuriated by the idea of humans and apes being related. The discovery of the gorilla, of all primates anatomically nearest to humans, fuelled the scientific debate how animals and men are different, physically and in brain function. Books were written about the question which ape was our nearest cousin. The Chimp was also a worthy candidate. Science was divided about it, religion dismissed Darwin with a vengeance.

The champion of evolution was ridiculed in a multitude of cartoons.

But the general public was fascinated by the discovery of the gorilla and by the adventures of Paul Du Chaillu.

From 1856 to 1859 Du Chaillu travelled through western Africa, bringing back a choice of plants and animals, 20 gorilla skeletons and skulls among them. In 1861 he was nothing less than a celebrity when he addressed the *Royal Geographical Society* of London, telling about his many advertures with a row of stuffed gorilla's to back him up. But his many enemies were there too. They thought him an amateurist. Obviously exploring 'on the spot' carried much less weight than being a scientist who never set foot outside a scientific institution.

It is unlikely that Buel, only 12 years old in 1861, had personally heard Du Chaillu lecturing, but he certainly grew up with the gorilla, which could hardly be missed in the second half of the 19th century.

The man Buel is kind of a mystery. No picture of him anywhere. Apart from *'Sea and Land'* he wrote several other richly illustrated books, *'The Story of Man'* (1889) among them. But what his own profession was I can't find on internet. He certainly had a love for 'horrible creatures' , the 'alleged' gorilla among them. Maybe that's why he also wrote a book on notorious criminals.

'Sea and Land' was published in 1887, about 25 years after Du Chaillu's haydays as the man who discovered the gorilla. One should think that the gentlemen of science would have made up their minds about the distinction between the gorilla and the orang utan by then. But we don't know when exactly Buel wrote his evaluation of Du Chaillu's discoveries, and if he ever saw them himself.

He writes: *"Without throwing discredit on Du Chaillu's statements* (which he keeps doing)*, it is plain that naturalists have too promptly accepted the evidences which he has produced. The skeletons, it is true, speak for themselves, as it were, but hardly conclusively. The principle point to decide is whether the Orang Outan and the gorilla are not one and the same."*He then names several other explorers, Livingstone among them, *"who hunted for years through the same country, but never so much as heard of the creature. This fact in itself is singular."'* Buel's position is clear. At first he throws his doubt between the lines but gradually he makes it more openly clear that he doesn't believe a word of Du Chaillu's claims.He quotes the explorer who describes the gorilla as *'extremely fierce, attacking a man, if pressed, with such extraordinary ferocity that, unless it be immediately killed by a well directed shot, the hunter is sure to fall a victim before it. '*

Buel mentions that Du Chaillu only brought two skelettons of gorilla's with him, while other sources mention 20.

They resemble, Buel keeps saying, the orang utan, except the skulls. Then, like a genuine enthousiast for explaining away the obvious, he tells us that there is no proof in that, for people also have different craniums and why shouldn't orang utans?

"An injury, disease, brain development, food, and a hundred other things, not to speak of malformations of birth, may account for the differences which we observe in the skulls of Du Chaillu's two specimens and those of the authenticated Orang Outan. I do not say that the gorilla is a myth, but until stronger evidences of its existence are produced we may expect that there will be doubts of its existence. "

How many times can a man keep expressing his doubt?

Buel reminds us of the scientists who explained *Homo Floresienses*, the 'hobbit' , when it was discovered in 2003, as an isolated case of malformation, a growth defect. Everything better than contemplate the 'impossibility ' of a new humanoid species, and a recent one at that.He then continues with several exaggarated reports from travellers in Africa, one of which told stories of apes gathering the fallen tusks of elephants (oh? since when do they drop spontaneously?) and more such strangeness.

One explorer knew of big apes walking on their hindlegs.

It's not the elephant tusks in the jungle that make Buel suspicious, it's the walking on hindlegs, as that can't be. Only humans can do that. Beasts are created to walk on all fours.

Buel tells us that he has *"patiently gone through no less than eleven hundred (!!) different books on Africa and found nowhere, save in Du Chaillu's works, any description of the gorilla."*

That man was motivated!Buel cites a lot from a book of Du Chaillu, who describes his courageous hunt for gorillas in colorful language.

Although the man admits that gorillas have humanlike traits, that doesn't stir his sympathy.

At a certain moment he hides in the bushes to observe the animals. They don't see him and they can't smell him.

He says: *"How fiendish their looks were! A cold shiver ran through me several times, for, of all the malignant expressions I had ever seen, their's were the most diabolical "*

It's very hard for any of us who love animals to understand how a natural animal can look 'malignant' or 'diabolical'. But such simple expressions convey the deep gap that separates us from how nature

was experienced in the 19th century.

Du Chaillu then tells us about a 'present' he received when coming back from an expedition: a female gorilla, shot, bound, with a fractured skull and a broken arm, with on her belly a baby. By her side is a male gorilla, watching over what once was his thriving family.

The explorer leaves the dying animal on his doorstep, does nothing to help her and nothing to help the baby, and he doesn't shoot her, what was maybe the most decent thing to do. The next morning she still lives. He admits that 'her pitiable cries' kept him awake at night. And he wonders about God who made these creatures 'almost' - but not quite - like humans.

The mother dies, and the child dies too, after a while, as does another captive child gorilla. Du Chaillu takes a picture of the beasts , an 'excellent one' .

Buel then goes back to his own story: how he as a child saw a monstrous stuffed ape in one of Barnums sideshows, and concluded that that must have been a gorilla *"because it was too ugly to be anything else"*

And after reminding us of the mermaids and unicorns made to deceive, he says: *"I therefore repeat, that until the gorilla is brought under the examination of approved scientists who are familiar at least with the Simian family, cool- headed people, while not denying, will not conclude positively that there is in Africa, or in any other part of the world, such an animal."*

One wonders if there hasn't been ample time for 'cool headed approved scientists' to examine the evidence?

Approved by whom? By Buel?

He ends his longwinded argumentation, before proceeding to the habits of the orang utan, with a last sneer in the direction of Du Chaillu: *"It is much to be regretted, if such an animal really exists, that we have to depend upon a single authority for all the knowledge we possess concerning it, for all the interesting products of creation surely none exceed the gorilla, and the naturalist is constantly thirsting for more information respecting it."*I wonder if Buel ever got convinced the gorilla exists?About Du Chaillu: http://www.mainlesson.com/displayauthor.php?author=chaillu

THE WONDROUS SIGNS OF HEAVEN

We, the people on earth, have always looked up to the heavens for guidance. Be it the configurations of stars, the movements of the planets or things happening in our athmosphere. Even today we ask ourselves what certain unusual lights or strange clouds may mean and what science has to say about it. And even today science doesn't have all the answers.

People in the past were left to their own devices when the heavens decided to come up with something new or threatening. Given the way of thinking from Antiquity on, what happened above people's heads was likely to have an ominous importance for people's life. Especially comets were harbingers of evil, wars, pestilence, fires, everything people dreaded. And strange enough there seemed to have been a lot more comets around in those days than there are seen in our times. In front of me is the book *'On Monsters and Marvels'* of **Ambroise Paré** (1510-1590), army surgeon and enlightened inventor of protheses, in medical knowledge far ahead of his time. Paré was court surgeon of four different French kings.
The book is as Fortean as can be, Paré describes the whole circus of terrestrial 'monster births' and celestial anomalies, like Falls of all kinds.
His chapter *'On Celestial Monsters'* starts like this: ***"The Ancients have left it to us in writing that the face of the sky has so many times been disfigured by bearded and hairy comets, by torches, lamps, pillars, lances, bucklers, battalions of clouds, dragons, duplication of Moones and Suns, and other things, which I did not want to omit, in order to make this book on Monsters complete."***

He then quotes *'Histoires prodigieuses'* of **Pierre Boaistuau**, who took it from the German **Conrad Lycosthenes** (1518-1561), who writes about the 'Blood covered comet which appeared in Westrie, on the ninth day of October 1528' And then: ***This comet was so horrible and frightening that it engendered such great terror in the common people that some of them died of fear and others fell ill. This strange comet lasted an hour and a quarter, and began to appear in the direction of the rising Sun, then drew near the Midi (Southern France) ; it seemed to be of an excessive length, and it was of the color of blood; at the summit of this comet one could see the shape of a curved arm holding a large sword in its hand, as if it would like to strike."***

Here we already lost the writer. I mean, remember the comet Hale-Bobb? Almost invisible to the unaided eye? High in the sky? And making his round slowly, visible for nights on end? These comets in the past must have been a different species! But were they comets?
The story becomes even weirder, as Paré continues: ***"At the end of the point (of the sword) there were three stars, but the one that was directly on the point was more bright and shiny than the others. On the two sides of the rays of this comet there could be seen a great number of hatchets, knives, swords, colored with blood, among which there was a great number of hideous human faces, with their beards and hair bristling."***

Imagine such a sight in our times! People would call the police. MUFON would get an overload of panicky phone calls. The USA airforce would send fighter jets to eliminate this abomination. Without result, of course.
Paré adds: ***"Comets have never appeared without producing some bad effect, and leaving behind a sinister outcome."*** They came and went, and their periodical appearance was dreaded. Disasters of human and natural making were plentyful, and comets were long seen as the harbingers of death. Among the many comets that honour us with their visits, Halley's comet is the most well known. Even the Babylonians and the ancient Chinese knew it, observing and keeping records of its progress. So it wasn't **Sir Edmond Halley**(1656-1742) who discovered the comet, but he was the one who calculated the trajectory and the periods between its appearance: *76 years*. Nobody in our days will think of blaming a heavenly body for outbreaks of any epidemic or war. We think.But leave it to **Loren Coleman** to check out (possible) connections. He did that in *FT 47, p65*, from 1059 BCE till 1986, and among those calamities are all the things that can go wrong with humanity, power struggles and assassinations, bloody invasions, cruel conquests, extreme weather, floods, fires, quakes, mining disasters, riots, epidemics, the list goes on and on. In 1986 Halley's baby had Chernobyl in its wake and the disaster with the Challenger shuttle. This year is extensively commented on in the same *FT, p26*. Check your own FT if you wish.
Coleman also finds possible links between Halley and clusters of suicides, in 1910 and in 1985. So the fear of comets described by Paré and many others was still there in our times.
On second thought, it 's less outlandisch than it sounds. The Moon has a marked influence on our behaviour and processes on Earth, the

Eén broot kost nogh al 6 st., en het vervolgh van allen dingen is vervaerelijck dier; groote aertbevinghen op sommige plaetsen. Eén broot nu 5 st. één oort, somtijds één oort min 5 st., naer advenant datter veel of weijnigh te coop quam.

Item in februarij is in Hollandt groot lijden, inemer en schaeden van 't water geweest; eenen dijck door gebrocken, die noijts meer doorgebrocken was, veel landt ondergegaen en afgedreven, overmits groote winden en tempeesten.

Item donder en blixem, alsoo dat te *Nimwegen* een kerck van den helsche viere verbrandt is; daer hinck een goude klock in, die in voorige iaeren gevonden was wonderlijck en miraculeus; dese clock is nu versmolten door het helsche vier. Groot aertbevingen op sommige plaetsen. Daer sijn oock veel teeckenen gesien in de loght van veel en verscheiden menschen hier te Weert; ten eersten sagh men des nâghts tusschen elf en twelf uuren in de loght strijdtbaer volck, dat sich tegen malkander sette als ten strijde; item een Bourgoignons cruijs; item drij doodtkisten en een root sweert; dat is gezien de twee leste daegen van februarij. — In april ginck het broot weder af tot op vier st. en 4 st. en één oort op en af.

the planets, if you believe in astrology, are doing their best too, so why wouldn't a comet set things in motion? How? Not a clue, but that doesn't mean it couldn't be somehow true. Not Halley's ominous comet, but two others were dominating the heavens in 1566, according to the *'Kronijk van Maria Wijngaard',* a remarkable record written down by a nun of the Convent of Maria Wijngaard in Weert, province of Brabant, in the Netherlands, from 1542 till 1570. Sister Maria Luyten tells us of the rising prize of bread and in the next sentence of terrible earthquakes (which is VERY unusual, virtually unheard of in our country), wild storms, lightning burning down a church, and in the sky two blazing and one black Sun. In

another year four Suns, floods, fires, and signs in heaven of crosses and armies fighting and even coffins together with a red sword....but, she concludes, the prize of bread is down again.
Here ◄ a Dutch fragment from the Chronicle, starting end ending with bread....
Count your blessings! Then, in August 1566, as if it still wasn't enough, protestant militia were threatening and raping the nuns, plundering their food, burning their lands and meanwhile destroying everything that was beautiful in churches and convents all over the country and in Europe. We are talking about the '*beeldenstorm*', the Iconoclastic fury of that year, which was no different from what IS is doing now to cultural icons that are not their own In the wake of all this violence the harvest failed, people and lifestock died from hunger and illness, and then, at last, the pest arrived, killing most of the population. All that time strange omens were seen in the heavens. Are these things related? There is no way to know for sure.
The people in those horrible times certainly though so. It was all the Lords will, the good and the bad. So they picked up the pieces and thanked God...As for armies in the sky, they happened to Sister Maria in the 16th century, and they happened in the days of Pliny (23-79 CE) They kept happening over the centuries. Not once or twice, but many times.
Such things are never explained other than by saying that people in bygone days were more liable to religious visions and superstitious interpretations of normal phenomena. That may be true, but in my view that is far from an all-in explanation. People in the past were not more stupid than we are and they were far more inclined to look up at the (unpolluted) skies.

Something else was going on. Maybe the skies wère different. Maybe there's a more outlandish explanation, one that includes holograms projected by what we call aliens: entities who for some reason only known to themselves are in the habit of giving us what we are most likely to believe. Peasant children are seeing 'Mary' , people in dire times are seeing crosses and signs according to their conviction that the heavens foretell what will happen on Earth.
Listen to this, again from Paré, who quotes Pliny: "***During the Cambrian Wars, there were heard from the air sounds of trumpets and clarions, along with a great clattering of weapons."*** The 'trumpets and clarions' remind us of the strange 'end of the world' sounds that went viral on internet some time ago. We missed the weapen clattering, though.
Then gives Paré another example of a sky battle: ***"In the year 1550, on the 19th of July, not very far from the city of Wittenberg, there was seen in the air a large stag, surrounded by two huge armies, which made a great noise while combatting each other, and at that very instant, blood fell on the ground, like a heavy rain, and the sun split into two pieces, one of which seemed to have fallen to the ground."*** (!) Remember Fatima? 13 Oct 1917? The revolving 'Sun' falling to earth?
Also, says Paré:
"before the capture of Constantinople, there appeared in the air a large army with an infinity of dogs and other animals". He then proceeds to give us a Fortean cookie based on **Julius Obsequens** (4th century CE) who relates a number of Falls that sound very familiar to us. In Italy, in the year 458, ***"flesh rained down in big and little chunks, which was in part devoured by the birds of the sky before it might fall to earth, and the rest which fell to earth, remained a long time without spoiling or changing color or odor."***
In 989 wheat rained down from the sky and snow as red as blood fell near Venice. In the year 180, it rained milk and oil in great abundance and the fruit trees bore wheat. Lycosthenes tells that in Saxony it rained fishes in great numbers, and at another time it rained blood for three whole days and nights in England and other places.
This all sounds familiar. Lycosthenes mentions three suns and three moons in Bavaria, in 1554.

Not in the sky, but on the ground another very strange thing occurred during the reign of Nero, told by Pliny: ***"A Roman officer possessed***

two fields on both sides of the highway, the one being a meadow, the other planted with olive trees. It came about by a miraculous force that these two fields changes places, which was judged to proceed from an earthquake."
That must have been one weird earthquake.
Some of us may remember the 'cookie cutter": a large chunk of neatly severed meadow placed somewhere else, without breaking or scattering clumps of earth around. Never solved, as far as I know.

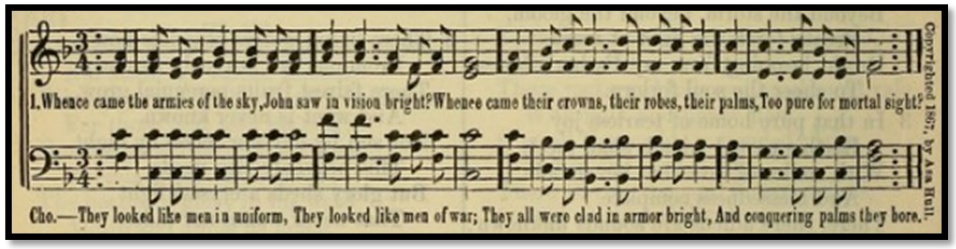
There's another book, a bit more recent, from, first print, 1904: "*Last Day Tokens'*, by **J.N Loughborough**.

The writer is, like the title says, inclined to judge all 'wondrous signs' as foretold by the prophecy of Jeremiah (25: 32-33) and the final battle of the Apocalyps.
But that is of no consequence here.
Mr Loughborough has many very interesting things to tell us. And what's even better, his booklet is free from internet downloadable in pdf.

Above we mentioned battles in the air. Loughborough has several for us.
The one I'm about to relate happened in 1870 and was watched by a man and his nephew in
North Western Illinois.
The night was dark, it was new moon. At first the duo saw bright circles of golden red in the sky which turned into a beautiful crown. This vision lasted for 10 minutes. A red band stretching from east to west appeared.
Then: ***"While we were looking wonderingly upon this, there arose from the north, as far up as the sun would be when two hours high, a perfect army composed of thousands of men, fully equipped, arms shouldered; and then from the south, another army just like the first arose. Both of these armies were clad in deep red and marched toward one another. When they reached the red band they leveled their guns, and both sides fired at once. We heard no report, but saw the blast of the fire from the guns, and the smoke rolling upward. Then all at once they seized their guns by the barrels, and with the breech of the guns began beating one another, using their guns as clubs. I was in the Civil War in 1861, but this scene in the heavens was the most awful battle one could ever want to witness. The clubbing went on until there was not a person left standing. All were killed and prostrate on the ground.***
While the two men were looking - we can only imagine in what state of mind - this scene disappeared, but then a ***"flaming red light came up, reveiling a terrible scene of dead bodies and broken guns, covering the whole earth as far as the eye could extend. This whole scene, with its varied changes, lasted from thirty to forty-five minutes."***
The illustration above is a church hymn, (actually see p.26-R) probably inspired by such happenings: *'Whence came the armies of the Sky?'*

How about the sun?
Lloyds Weekly News is quoted by Loughborough, Febr 28 1909: ***"A phenomenon of the sky was seen the other day in Stockholm. A sphere of the same size as the sun appeared in the heavens to the west of the real sun, and shone with all the colors of the rainbow."*** Of course we all think : this was a UFO. Maybe one who was practising for the *'Miracle of the Sun'* in the skies of Fatima, Portugal, on 13 Oct 1917, 8 years later, when the same thing was seen, except the real sun seemed to have switched places with this colorful replica.

In 1898, the writer tells us, there was on March 20 an account of a *'Flaming Sword'* seen by thousands of people in the sky of New York City and outside of the city. It was impossible to miss it or interprete it differently, and the writer believed it to be a portent of war. Not too difficult, there is always war somewhere, portents or not.
A letter from a John Morrison, Glasgow Canada tells about a vision he and several other people saw on the evening of May 21, 1843.


1. Whence came the armies of the sky, John saw in vision bright? Whence came their crowns, their robes, their palms, Too pure for mortal sight?
Cho.—They looked like men in uniform, They looked like men of war; They all were clad in armor bright, And conquering palms they bore.
Copyrighted 1867, by Asa Hull.

"On Monday last, in the afternoon, it being a cloudy afternoon, I saw a spot of clear sky in the West, and in that the appearance of a splendid crown, highly ornamented, as clear and bright as ever I saw in a picture.
I kept my eye upon it, and hastened home to show it to my family. But I saw it was changing, and it became quite round. It was as red as blood, and much larger than the moon. A black line came across the center, and after a few moments it disappeared. "The writer of 'Tokens in the Sky' talks about many visions in the sky that we can now explain as very down to earth, like sundogs and inverted rainbows. But there are several instances, as we saw above, that are less easy to sweep under the carpet. Some of those concern the Moon. Listen to this:

A Mr James King, a 'respectable citizen of this country and a gentleman of undoubted veracity' called the office of the *New York Express* (in May 1843) to tell about a remarkable appearance of the moon last night. (The whole story was in this paper on May 25 1843, if anyone wants to check)
Mr Wilson, not a man of few words, starts telling about his habits in observing the moon and the weather, for which he makes use of binoculairs.
This Tuesday night things were different. The moon seemed three times its usual size, and ***"more like a circular sheet of fire than like an ordinary moon. In a few moments a very black spot was clearly descernible about the center of the moon's disc, which immediately commenced playing up and down, backward and forward, on the surface; en as the spot approached the upper edge, it grew less, and a faint light distinctly shone through it. "***

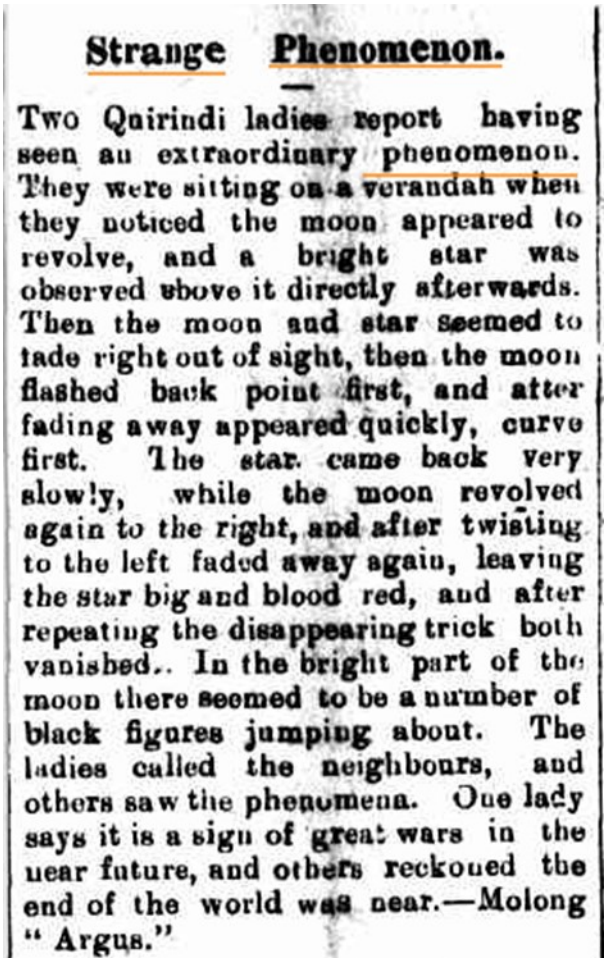
Then, lo and behold...**:** ***"This spot became stationary in the center, when the moon divided into three separate fragments, each giving distinct and separate lights, being of irregular forms and appearing as thought the spot had split them off. Then the moon gradually returned to it's original appearance, and from that again looked natural"***

But the story is not over yet, for a few minutes later it happens again, and this time the moon splits in four parts.
"Immediately a light resembling the tail of a comet shot from the lower fragment, while another, much larger, struck off directly upward. This last one turned into the shape of a man standing erect. The figure was of the most perfect imaginable symmetry, of

"Immediately a light resembling the tail of a comet shot from the lower fragment, while another, much larger, struck off directly upward. This last one turned into the shape of a man standing erect. The figure was of the most perfect imaginable symmetry, of about the medium size and height, clothed in the purest snow white, and the back alone presenting itself to view. It was visible a few moments, when gradually the figure changed to the simple light, the lights returned to the fragments, these again came together, and the moon resumed a natural appearance."

Looking for a split moon on internet it seems Mohammed did that all by himself. This is the text from the Quran:
"The Hour has drawn near, and the moon has been cleft asunder (the people of Makkah requested Prophet Muhammad to show them a miracle, so he showed them the splitting of the moon)." (Quran 54:1)
(There's even a 10 minutes YouTube about it, but since it's hard to prove the Quran with the Quran, there's not much in it that makes the 'event' believable.)But without any religious connotations: the moon is full of strange caprices. To paraphrase Hildegard Knef: "*Er braucht Tapetenwechsel*"
Another broken moon appeared in Sweden in 1870, according to Loughborough, and this was told to the writer by an eye-witness, who related that the moon was full and that, because of an upcoming storm, many farmers rose at 3 o'clock to bring in the hay before it could get wet.
"Their astonishment was great, when they beheld the moon lined off into four quarters, and each quarter a different color. The upper right hand quarter was a bright red, while the left hand upper quarter was natural color, the lower quarters being bright yellow and livid green. Hundreds were on their knees, calling God for mercy, fearing that the end of all things was right upon them."What to think of that?
What to think of any of this?
What to think of another very peculiar sighting in August 1896, in Urskong, Norway? When for an hour or more a red cross was seen in the sky, and in great red letters **'J K S'** , '*Jeg Kommer Snart'* in Norwegian, meaning "***I come quickly"***
"So great was the impression of this scene upon the people, that many had painted it on the flat surface of perpendicular rocks, in red letters, in various places, and under it the letters J K S, to preserve the

wonderful sight they had just seen in the heavens in the memory of their children."



Strange Phenomenon.

Two Quirindi ladies report having seen an extraordinary phenomenon. They were sitting on a verandah when they noticed the moon appeared to revolve, and a bright star was observed above it directly afterwards. Then the moon and star seemed to fade right out of sight, then the moon flashed back point first, and after fading away appeared quickly, curve first. The star came back very slowly, while the moon revolved again to the right, and after twisting to the left faded away again, leaving the star big and blood red, and after repeating the disappearing trick both vanished.. In the bright part of the moon there seemed to be a number of black figures jumping about. The ladies called the neighbours, and others saw the phenomena. One lady says it is a sign of great wars in the near future, and others reckoned the end of the world was near.—Molong "Argus."

I can't help to speculate again: what else can it be than a projection? We all see things in the sky, but clouds are never sharply defined, and they change. Even with little or no wind; they change. Nothing stays in the sky for over an hour without changing. And when was

the last time we saw clearly marked letters in the sky?
Right.
And why this message? The 'Second Coming' takes, like the coming of Maitreya, a long time. Don't hold your breath.

There was an even weirder happening in 1843, a good year for miracles in the sky. On March 27 of that year the pilot of the *William Penn* steamboaton the Ohio River saw something that took his breath away. While he was steering the boat along in the star-bright night ***"all of a sudden a light burst forth, the whole earth appearing to light up***". The man thought of lightning, but the light stayed.
And then he saw a serpent ***"in a crooked position, except the tail, which was straight, and the head towards the east. It turned to a lively bright red, deep and awful, and remained stationary among the stars."***
But the heavy part is yet to come....
For part of the serpent changed into the letter **G**. Which, after a few minutes, changed into an **O**. Which changed in another minute into a **D**. A deluded captain? I don't think so. Someone, coming from somewhere, played tricks in those days, and in ours, only different ones.
When today we look at the stars and the moon, we don't expect them to move or turn or fade away for no reason. When something moves, it's usually a plane, or a satelite, or maybe a UFO, but the moon is in the habit of moving like she should: slowly, regularly, and almost unperceptibly.
We know her phases, nothing out of the ordinary there.
Is she only pretending?
I stumbled upon this ▲ strange clipping from the *Argyle Liberal and District Recorder, NSW, Febr 7, 1905.*
Judge for yourself. Black figures dancing about? It's interesting that this experience of the two ladies triggered a response from someone three days later in the *Molong Argus, NSW, of Febr 10 1905.* Judge for yourself, but I don't think the writer makes what happened any more clear, bringing telepathy into the equasion.

We can go on and on. The heavens have been a marvellous screen for miraculous happenings.

VILLAGERS SEE ANGELS IN SKY

While tending his sheep on the Sussex Downs (Eng.) a shepherd saw a white line slowly spread across the sky, and from it appear a vision of Christ crucified on the Cross.

As he stared, six angels took form. They had long white wings and one was playing a harp. The apparition lasted for two minutes before it faded away.

The shepherd, Mr. Fowler, of Firle, near Lewes, rushed down the hillside to his village to tell what he had seen, but he was not the only one who had witnessed the spectacle.

Many villagers working on the land had also seen it

This one ▲ is from the *Northern Star (Lismore NSW) 25 Jan 1941,* a time when angels and Christ were seen rather often.
It's very likely that the dire times triggered these visions, as many people were praying to the entities that showed up.
Are they tulpa's then? Or are they archetypical images, which entities not of this world are using to bring us to our senses?
Maybe it's a joint venture, stunning us. History teaches that even a multitude of visions doesn't make us a more peaceful species.

So, what's next?

Strange Phenomenon.

To the Editor of the ARGUS.

SIR,—Re that "strange phenomenon" witnessed by two Quirindi ladies, as reported in your last issue. It is a pity they did not give the exact date of the remarkable occurrence. History tells us that it is usual in times of war, or volcanic eruptions or earthquakes, for a star (sometimes two) to approach the moon nightly, and at last the star appears to clash right into the moon. The phenomenon witnessed by the Quirindi ladies was evidently a telepathic indication of the St. Petersburg massacre of women and children, and what will follow. It is not recorded of anyone but "the wise men of the East" seeing the Star of Bethlehem," but the Scriptures say "ye shall see signs and wonders." A lady friend of mine who has just returned from Sydney tells me that she, too, witnessed the phenomenon as reported in the ARGUS, and says it occurred about 2 o'clock in the morning. It was indeed an awe-inspiring sight, thus verifying the words of the Psalmist, "I will shew thee terrible things." I do not profess to be versed in the art of telepathy, but could say a deal more on the subject for the information of sceptical readers. I regard the recent phenomenon as a most significant omen.—Yours, &c.,

EAST MOLONG.

Sources:
Ambroise Paré *'On Monsters and Marvels'* , Translation Janis Pallister (1980)
Zuster Maria Luyten: Kronijk van Maria Wijngaard, Weert 1547-1570
Fortean Times 47 , *Diary of a Mad Planet*, p26, *Halley's Comet as a Portent* p 65, Loren Coleman
F.R. Stephenson and C.B.F. Walker: *'Halley's Comet in History'* (1985)
J.N. Loughborough *'Last Day Tokens'* , fourth edition (1909)
Loes Modderman: *'De wondere tekenen des hemels'* (ezine *Verwondering* 46, July 2015)
TROVE Newspaper archive Australia.
Illustration of the fighting armies in the sky is from *'The Book of Miracles'* , Augsburg, 1550.

Giant Pandas and Westerners
A Short History

Anonymous (I was given the name of the author but I have mislaid it)

Date	Who	Destination	Comments	Source
1869	Abbe Armand David,Missionary	Paris Museum	Observed Panda for first time. Got local hunters to get one. Captured living but killed to transport.	
1894	M.M.Berezovski	London	Studied bamboo	
1906-08	John Weston Brooke	London	Explorer,who was killed by local tribesmen	
1908	Fritz Max Weiss	Berlin	Worked in consulate in China.Acquired a number of skins. Some still in Berlin Museum.	
1914	Walter Stotzner	London	First observation of live animal in wild	
1914	Hugo Weigold	Berlin Museum	Ditto?! + 5 other skins locally bought	
1929	Roosevelts	Field Museum Chicago	First shooting	
1931 May	Brooke Dolan Expedition (Ernst Schaefer actually shot it)	Diorama at Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences	Second shooting, 3 more obtained from locals.	
1934 Dec				

1931	Ernst Schaeffer (from above expedition)	Berlin	Panda skin brought to Berlin but don`t know what happened to it
1934 Dec	Sage Expedition	American Museum of Natural History NY	Third shooting.2 additional skins obtained.
1935 Apr	Brocklehurst	London	Fourth shooting
1936	Ruth Harkness	New York refused. Chicago Brookfield	Live cub(Su Lin) arrived Dec 1936 San Francisco
1936	Quentin Young	Chinese Academy of Sciences	(Chinese American)
1937	Floyd Tangier Smith	??	One died en route to port in China,one before Singapore
1937	Jack Young	??	Quentin`s brother
1938	Ruth Harkness		Another live cub(Mei Mei)
1938 b4 April	Floyd Tangier Smith	London Zoo (3) ,One via Berlin & Paris to Louisiana	2 died, one en route, one in quarantine. Arrived London 24 Dec 1938.He had contract with London Zoo and British Muse-
1981	George Schaller		Author of The Last Panda

Sources for information in tables on the previous two pages in date order:

1869: Abominable Snowmen: Legend Come to Life, by Ivan T.Sanderson.

1894 Ms Jenkins Natural History Museum (NHM)

1906-08 Ms Jenkins NHM

1908 Dr Michael Ohl,Berlin NHM and Wikipedia

1914 Encyclopaedia Britannica? Own book: Ins unerforschte Tibet

1914 Panda by Chris Catton

1929 Trailing the Giant Panda

1931 May Lady & The Panda. Ami`s Panda patch

1931 Dr Michael Ohl,Berlin. NHM

1934 Dec Lady & The Panda. Ami`s Panda patch. ANHM Annual Rpt 1934

1935 Apr Illustrated & Dramatic News

1936 Lady & The Panda

1936 The Last Panda Lady & The Panda

1937 The China Journal

1937 The Last Panda

1938 www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0.9171.759451.00.html

1938 before April? Www.giantpandazoo.com Also Time Magazine,see above

1981 The Last Panda

Books with History

Chasing the Panda by M Kiefer

www.amazon.com/reader/1568582234?_encoding-UTF8&query=sage#reader_1568582

The Lady & The Panda by V Croke

http://www.amazon.com/Lady-Panda-Adventures-American-Explorer/dp/0375759700/ref=pd_sim_b_1#reader_0375759700

The Last Panda by G Schaller, Trailing the Giant Panda by T & K Roosevelt and those books below on www.archive.org

Also French sites http://pandageant.ifrance.com/ierecherche.htm and http://pandageant.ifrance.com/bibliographie_articles.htm include some more references (Journal of the Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire,1936 Vol 28 p 21-23

Pandas and Westerners Summary

Giant Pandas were unknown in the west until a French Missionary to China,Pere Armand David,came across a skin in 1869.He got a local hunter to find another animal and he despatched this to a museum in Paris where it caused a great deal of interest—was it a bear? Despite the interest, the Giant Panda proved to be very elusive. Over the next half century or so explorers reported only a few sightings and even fewer specimens were obtained by local tribesmen for museums in the West. It gradually became clear the Panda was only to be found in a very small area in Western China not far from the Tibet border.

From The Giant Panda by Dwight Davis

The giant panda has a very restricted distribution in the high mountains of western Szechwan and eastern Sikang in western China. This is the area of the extremely complex mountain escarpment that sharply separates the Min River Valley from the Tibetan highland to the west. The vertical distribution of the Panda is as limited as its geographic 5,000 and 10,000 feet.

Explorer Deaths:

Roosevelt—1943—Alaska—Suicide

William Harkness—1935-Shanghai Cancer

Ruth Harkness-1947-Alcoholism

Dean Sage—1943-Fishing trip

Brocklehurst—1942-Burma

Floyd Tangier Smith-1939-Heart Attack

Notes from www.archive.org

The book "A naturalist in western China", ("with vasculum, camera, and gun; being some account of eleven years` travel, exploration, and observation in the more remote parts of the Flowery kingdom") (1913) by Wilson,Ernest Henry, 1876-1930; Sargent,Charles Sprague,1841-1927 states:

THE PANDA (page 182)

This richly coloured animal is rare in Szechuan, but more common

In Yunnan. In the former province it occurs in the south-west corner beyond the Chiench`ang Valley, frequenting the forested and brush-clad country between 5000 and 10,000 feet altitude.In Chungking,Sui Fu,Chengtu,and other cities the skin is often on sale.

In the shape of its head, short, broad face, and short ears this animal is very catlike; the claws too are partially retractile. The limbs are short and stout; the soles of the feet furry; the tail is 16 to 18 inches long; stout, cylindrical, and ringed at intervals like a civet-cat, the fur is long, soft, rich, dark, ferruginous on back, shoulders, and flanks; under-parts, black; claws, white; soles of feet, greyish; forehead, chestnut with rufous stripe running down from the eye to near the snout; face, lips, edges, and inner surface of ears, white; outer surface of ears, dark red.

The Chinese Panda ranges from 38 to 44 inches, tip to tip, and weighs 9 to 10 lbs. It is darker and rather larger than the typical Himalayan species, and has been recognized as a distinct race under the name of Ailurus fulgens styani. Its colloquial name is “Chu-chieh-liang” which refers to the nine rings on the tail.

THE PARTI-COLOURED BEAR OR GIANT PANDA

This unique animal [Ailuropus melanoleucus] is perhaps the most interesting beast found in Western China.Originally discovered by L`Abbe David in Mupin (1869),it was again met with by M.M.Berezovski in the Kansu-Szechuan frontier during 1892-94,but so far there is no record of a foreigner having killed a specimen; those obtained by the above collectors were taken by natives. Several skins, more or less imperfect, have reached Europe within recent years, but no foreigner has so far seen a living example. The natives of the Chino-Tibetan borderland know this animal well and call it the “Peh Hsiung” (White Bear).In Chinese literature it is ref-

- erred to as the “Pi” . Skins are, on rare occasions ,on sale in Cheng-tu, where they command high prices.In that city I have seen in the possession of Europeans several fine examples in use as floor-rugs, but I was never able to secure a specimen myself.

The ears, shoulders, and legs of this animal are black, and black rings surround the eyes; the rest of the body is rich creamy white. It has a distinct if short tail, and the soles of the feet are hairy. The fur on the pelt is long, glossy, rather soft, and very handsome in appearance. “Parti-coloured” well describes this beast, though from the preponderance of white the native name “White Bear” is very applicable, especially in contradistinction to the Black and Brown Bears of the same region.

The Parti-colured Bear ranges from the vicinity of Wa shan westwards to the forests beyond Tachienlu, northwards to Sungpan,and thence eastwards through the high mountains to the vicinity of Lungan Fu.It is essentially a denizen of the Bamboo jungles between 6000 and 11,000 feet, feeding on the young shoots of these plants. The natives declare that it eats nothing else, but this assertion is probably too sweeping. Throughout the large area encompassed within the above boundaries. Bamboo jungles are a characteristic feature, forming well-marked zones. In the sparsely timbered belts and in open Silver Fir forests. Bamboo forms absolutely impenetrable thickets. The culms are slender and grow some 10 to 12 feet tall. These plants are impatient of shade from above and grow so thickly together as to starve out all undergrowth and rival shrubs. The young shoots which continue to spring up from June to end of September, according to altitude and species, are white within and excellent eating. The Giant Panda shows good taste in confining his diet mainly to this excellent vegetable! This animal is not common, and the savage nature of the country it frequents renders the possibility of capture remote. It is occasionally shot by native hunters when after Budorcas and Serow,but is not regularly hunted. It is also sometimes captured in dead-fall traps.

Sea Serpents of Australia

Ulrich Magin

Despite a number of very active researchers, a number of Australian sea-serpent reports have not yet been published outside of their usual habitat, that is, dusty (or digital) newspaper files.

The first case, from 1891, is pretty mysterious – does the "dog head" imply a mammal, or a dog fish, in other words, a shark?

"A SEA MONSTER. / SYDNEY., NOV. 10. A sea monster, thirty feet long, with a head shaped like a dog's, pursued a diver at Newcastle. He was hauled to the surface before it could overtake him, and two men afterwards speared it, but let it escape." (*Star*, NZ, 19 November 1891)

Little do we learn about the next case, just that it happened in 1896.

"Alleged Sea Serpent. The weekly Australian mail brought news of an alleged sea serpent having been found by a lighthouse-keeper on the rocks near Cape Everard, on the eastern coast of Victoria, and as the existence of this marine monster is one of the favorite subjects of speculation with the British public, the papers (says our London correspondent) have been running the report for all that it was worth. Great dailies, like the 'Standard' and the 'Chronicle,' have had leading articles about it, eminent scientists have been interviewed, and a large amount of correspondence has been elicited. One evening paper, the 'Globe,' broke out in poetry, commencing –
'Professor M'Coy,
Sea serpent, ahoy!'
We are all now awaiting with interest the report that Sir Frederick M'Coy will make upon the curious creature described in the latest Melbourne papers to hand." (*Lake Wakatip Mail*, 4 December 1896)

And now what was this in 1897?

"ANOTHER SEA SERPENT. OUTSIDE SYDNEY HEADS.
(Per Press Association. – Copyright.)
Sydney, June 30. The captain of a tug boat reports having seen a sea serpent close to his vessel when 25 miles off the heads. It was coiled in in the shape of the figure '8,' but uncoiled itself on the ship's approach and disappeared, being between 30 and 40 feet in length.

This day. Another estimate makes the sea serpent 50ft long, with a head like a calf." (*Hastings Standard*, 1 July 1897)

The next case, 1899, the dead monster found by the *Emu*, is known from Heuvelmans, and Fort.

"THE SEA SERPENT. REALLY DISCOVERED AT LAST. ITS REMAINS BROUGHT TO SYDNEY. Electric Telegraph – Copyright – United Presa Association.
Sydney, Feb. 23. The steamer Emu brought from Suwarrow Island a portion of remains consisting of two skulls, two backbones, and a number of ribs of what is claimed to be a veritable sea serpent. The monster was washed ashore two months before the steamer's visit. The fearful stench prevented them securing the skeleton. The captain describes it as sixty feet long. It weighed seventy tons, and consisted of one body with a double spine and two distinct heads somewhat resembling a horse's. The skin was of a brownish color and covered with hair.
(Received Feb. 24, 9.20 a.m.) Feb. 24. – Experts have not as yet expressed an opinion as to the sea serpent. In some quarters the remains are described as 'very like a whale's.'

The sea serpent has long been popularly believed to exist, especially in deep tropical seas, and from time to time stories of the sinuous aquatic monster have been brought by mariners, but were generally discredited as travellers' tales and controverted by zoologists, including the eminent Sir Richard Owen and others. Captain McQuhae described the appearance of such an animal in the South Atlantic Ocean in 1848. Other descriptions have been since published, and many explanations have been suggested. 'The Great Sea Serpent,' by Mr A. C. Oudemans, published in 1892, contains reports of 187 appearances, with 82 illustrations. Some years ago the sea serpent was reported to have been seen from one of the Union Company's steamers off the Mania Peninsula." (*Poverty Bay Herald*, 24 February 1899)
This was, as most treaders will already know, just a whale:
"NOT A SEA SERPENT
SYDNEY, this day
The Australian sea serpent story is exploded. A museum expert has declared the remains are portions of two zithoid whales. [sic]" (*Auckland Star*, 2 March 1899)

Ziphoid whales are beaked whales. The *Nemesis* case of 1900 is also known from Heuvelmans. In this brief way, it was noted in the New Zealand press:"THE SEA SERPENT. (UNITED PRESS ASSOCIATION) Perth, October 13. The captain of the steamer Nemesis saw a sea serpent near Cape Naturalist, about 200 feet long. It moved along the surface as a snake would on the land." (*Marlborough Express*, 13 October 1900)

A dead sea-serpent, washed ashore in 1901 near where the *Nemesis* saw hers, is new to me:

"That Sea Monster. Wellington, January 14. The Museum authorities are of opinion that the sea monster found on the West Australian coast may turn out to be a porpoise whale, of which there are some skeletons in their collections." (*Colonist*, 15 January 1901)

We learn more about this carcass from another report:

"A Sea Monster. (Press Association.– Copyright). Perth, January 11. A sea monster, sixteen feet long, and fourteen feet in girth, has been washed ashore near Freemantle.
(Press Association.)
Wellington, January 12. The museum authorities are of opinion that the sea monster found on the West Australian coast may turn out to be a porpoise whale, of which there are some skeletons in their collection." (*Manawatu Times*, 12 January 1901)

Completely previously unpublished is the next 1913 case which may have a conventional explanation:

"The Sea Serpent
...THE DIMBOOLA'S STORY.
A LONG STRING OF SEALS.
SYDNEY, June 21. The story of the sea serpent told by the captain, officers and passengers of the steamer Dimboola, has at last been explained away. It will lie remembered that the people of the Dimboola sighted what they thought to be a sea serpent, while they were crossing the bight and their story, which was related in all good faith, was received with derision with which all stories of the monster are received. The latest regarding it comes from the officers and crew of' the Blue Funnel steamer Alcenous, which arrived at Port Pirie, from Brisbane on Friday. On the way thither, the helmsman saw a remarkable object in the distance. He drew the attention of the officers on watch to it and lie was so convinced that it was a sea serpent or some extraordinary marine monster that he altered the course of the ship, so as to get a closer view of it.
With the aid of glasses they made out the object to be a huge fish, which they believed to be about a hundred yards long. Those on board became excited as the monster neared the ship, but presently they were surprised to sec quite close to them another long series of fish. At once they recognised this as a largo school of seals following each other in rows of about three deep. They were bobbing in and out of the water, and in the distance much resembled a huge fish.
Dr. Montgomery, who is the surgeon on the Alcerous, said, when he first saw the object, believed it to be the sea serpent seen by those on the Dimboola. That steamer did not get nearer than half a mile to it, and he can quite understand them believing it to be a serpent at that distance."(*Inangahua Times*, 5 July 1913)

A dead 1915 sea-serpent was – the animal well known as sea-snake:

“SEA SERPENT."
The sea serpent, found alive at Farquhar Inlet, near the Manning-River, and forwarded to Mr D. Stead, of the State Fisheries Department, proves to be the first specimen of its kind found in New South Wales (states the Sydney ‘Morning Herald’ of September 27).
This sea serpent measured about 8 feet long, and at a cursory glance looked like the carpet snake, which is common in the northern parts of the State and Queensland. Its coiling propensities when ' held in the air emphasised its similarity' to this land snake, and both hold their prey by vice-like coils. But in the shape of its body the sea serpent is quite different from its terrestrial brother. .A ground snake has a flattened or roundish under-part, on which it crawls, but the sea serpent's body underneath juts out after the fashion of-the keel of a ship, and when it gets washed ashore it becomes stranded on its side,- locomotion in the serpentine method as generally understood, being a matter of great difficulty with it. But in its native element the sea serpent darts through the water at a great pace, its tail, which resembles the flat end of a paddle, enabling it to steer with facility. Its greatest weight is concentrated in the lower part of its body to help it in dragging down and constricting whatever it seizes.
Mr Stead says that the sea serpent has, poison fangs, and its bite is deadly. It lives mostly at the top of the water, and has to come to the surface to breathe, as it possesses lungs and not gills. When it comes up to the top to breathe if is almost invisible from a boat, as it just puts its nose above the surface, all the Teat of it being immersed. The Farquhar Inlet specimen was kept alive for a week or so by Mr Stead in his departmental aquarium, and will be preserved as one of the most interesting specimens in the State piscatorial collection.” (*Oamaru Mail*, 16 October 1915)

Another bizarre specimen was reported in 1937. Again, I am at a loss

to suggest what was involved – a shark, an octopus?

“TERROR OF THE SEA. MONSTER SEIZES DIVER.
SYDNEY, this day. A mysterious sea monster, reports the Darwin correspondent of the "Sun," is spreading terror among the crews of Japanese pearling luggers operating north of Elcho Islands. It seized one diver on the seabed, devouring the mail and his gear in one sudden attack.” (*Auckland Star*, 12 May 1937)

Sea Serpents in New Zealand

Ulrich Magin

There are a large number of New Zealand sea monster reports which have not yet been noticed by researchers elsewhere. The following are just a few examples, most of them, cases of mistaken identity or hoaxes. I hope I’ll find some unknowns for the next bat I assemble, but here are the first finds:

We start in 1877:

“Sea Serpent.— Incited, probably by the telegram about the hoax in the Glasgow News concerning the sea serpent [of Oban], the Auckland Star recently published a minute burlesque account of the supposed capture of a serpent 186 feet long in Auckland harbour. The joke, however, was rather clumsy, and could have deceived no one.” (*Lyttelton Times*, 6 July 1877)

In 1883,“The Picton correspondent of a contemporary writes:—The Picton harbor has lately been visited by an enormous shark, several persons out boating having seen the fish in question, which is stated to be from fifteen to twenty feet in length. A party of men returning from the Kenepuru Sounds to Torea the other evening were followed for over two miles by this sea monster.” (*New Zealand Mail*, 10 March 1883)

The next two stories, from 1891 and 1908, are rather explanations – in both instances, an expert suggested that sea-serpents are nothing but hump-backed whales:

"THAT A SEA SERPENT.
We have asked Captain Farquhar, of the Northern Company's steamer Clansman, his opinions with regard to the sea serpent said to have been discovered on the New Zealand coast. Captain Farquhar is an old whaler, and his opinion is that what was seen is the calf of the hump-backed whale. These juveniles, in their play, rise on their tails 12 to 15 feet out of the water and then flop buck again. The serpentine continuity, Captain Farquhar explains, by the evolutions of shoals of porpoises. [sic] He has no doubt the monster observed and supposed to be a sea serpent, was the calf of a hump-backed whale, and that the mist through which it was seen magnified its size. The peculiar antics of the calf of the hump whale would also give the idea of serpentine motion Captain Farquhar states that this feature is so well known to whalers that in no instance has one of them reported a sea serpent." (*New Zealand Herald*, 11 August 1891) This opinion refers to the sighting from board the *Manapouri*, see Heuvelmans, p. 302.

"Mr W. L. Wallace, of Timaru, who was a member of the scientific expedition which has just completed a ten months' sojourn on Sunday Island, the main island of the Kermadec Group, suggest an explanation of the sea serpent stories. He says that in October, hundreds of hump-backed whales were seen off the islands playing about and apparently thoroughly enjoying themselves., A favorite practice of the animals is to rear themselves right out of the water until they seem to be standing on their tails, and then fall back with a great commotion. The huge carcase raised in the air in this manner might easily be taken for the head and neck of some reptilian monster." (*Manawatu Standard*, 8 December 1908)

The Kermadec Islands belong to New Zealand, and are situated in the tropics, some 500 to 620 miles northeast of North Island, and about the same distance west of Tonga.

The following article describes a 1911 sea-monster that fits nothing known, and hardly any sea-serpent seen before: a crocodile's head, a large fin, and bright colours!

"A CHRISTMAS VISITOR. / SEA SERPENT SIGHTED OFF NEW ZEALAND COAST. TWO HUNDRED FEET LONG. / (Press Association. By Telegraph. Copyright). / Sydney, Yesterday. / The officers of the Strathardle, which arrived to-day from Auckland, report passing a sea serpent on Sunday in the Tasman Sea. / The monster was two hundred feet in length, with a head like a crocodile's. A large fin showed out of the water. I [sic, The] body, which was of bright colours, tapered considerably at the tail. The sea serpent was travelling slowly. It was sighted two hundred miles off the New Zealand Coast." (*Manawatu Times*, 23 December 1911)

The last press report notes the 1939 stranding – and identification as a whale – of a sea-serpent:

"JUST A WHALE. / SEA SERPENT RUMOUR / A 50-FOOT CARCASS. MUSEUM OFFICIAL'S TRIP. Stimulated by a rumour that a near relative of the Loch Ness monster had been washed ashore at Plant Point, on the East Coast, Dominion Museum officials made an expedition there last week-end, for genuine sea serpents are not to be picked up every day, and the acquisition of one for the Museum would lie a notable event. / When this rather inaccessible stretch of coast was reached —a spot where winds and currents bring in much from the depths of the ocean-—the reputed sea serpent proved to be nothing more than a much decomposed whale. As the carcass was over 50ft long and the central section was buried in the sand, there was a resemblance to a sea serpent. / Even if scientists were disappointed in not being able to bring back in triumph a real sea serpent, they had a pleasant, if strenuous, outing, and even whale remains are not without interest to museum officials." (*Thames Star*, 29 July 1938)

A CRYPTID IN THE SOUTH CASPIAN SEA ?

Richard George

I've dusted off some copies of *Paranormal* magazine, which briefly vied with *Fortean Times* for newsagent's rack space about ten years ago. In one, from June 2010, I've found a piece by Karl Shuker about mermaid reports (1). I don't believe in mermaids, but I am interested in what could be mistaken for them. For instance, Shuker speculates that the 1830 account from Benbecula derived from a case of sirenomelia, where babies are born with fused-together legs.

Earlier in the article he presents something much more recent, and extremely intriguing:

"According to Iranian media sources in 2005, for the past two years a merman had been spied by sailors and residents of coastal regions around the southern and south-western Caspian Sea. Referred to by sailors as the Runan-Shah ("Master of the sea and rivers"), it was said to be roughly 165 cm tall and of strong build, with a protruding stomach, relatively squat legs and arms, flipper-like feet, four webbed fingers on each hand, black and green hair on its head, a sharply pointed nose, large orbicular eyes, a fairly large mouth with a projecting upper jaw but no chin, and skin the colour of moonlight".

Pravda then took this up and ran with it (2), adding an important detail: the creature made gurgling noises. Their involvement, of course, brings into play the possibility of Russian fake news. Bear that in mind as you bear with me.

My first thought, oddly enough, was of a large salamander. Giant salamanders of the genus Cryptobranchidae can reach five or six feet in length. Like the Runan-Shah, they have short limbs, wide mouths, pointy noses, and, interestingly, four webbed fingers on

their forelimbs. They also emit vocalisations. The Pacific giant salamander croaks and barks, and its Chinese relative can sound like a crying child – which is conducive to anthropomorphic transformation.

The black and green "hair" could be seaweed.

The Miocene witnessed a cryptobranchid not that far from the Caspian called *Ukrainurus hypognathus.* Could our creature be its undiscovered descendant ? After all, new species of giant salamander are still being found (3), even if hopes are fading that such a beast resides in the Trinity Alps region of California (4).

There's just one problem… Most salamanders, as far as we are aware, live in fresh water. However the Tiger Salamander can live in salt water, as can two species in Mexico, Taylor's Salamander and Anderson's Salamander. Laurence Jarvis points out that over a hundred amphibian species have shown adaptations to salt water, and that this field is still poorly understood (5). So a giant salamander in the Caspian Sea is not completely beyond the bounds of possibility. But it's a long shot.

A more likely, though less Fortean explanation, is misidentification of two well-known Caspian denizens, the Caspian Seal and the sturgeon. Seals, with their winsome vaguely human faces, are obvious candidates for merfolk. The Caspian Seal can achieve up to 5.9 feet in length, and lives in both fresh and salt water ("Master of the sea and rivers...") It also vocalises. But even stronger contenders are sturgeons. They are pale grey ("Colour of moonlight...") and have pointed noses. The body shapes and skeletons of sturgeons are highly variable, and evolution may still be occurring (6). So the sailors might have seen a strange, hitherto undiscovered species. And remember the noises mentioned by Pravda (fake news notwithstanding !) Sturgeon emit low frequency sounds when spawning – the so-called "sturgeon thunder" (7). Infrasound, we know, can cause uncanny perceptions. Did this, together with the distorting mirror of water, transmogrify a sturgeon ?

This is an interesting potential angle of investigation. Seizures of the temporal lobe can cause similar effects, notably distortions of size (8). This could be a factor in many of the cases we all cherish (large owl further enlarged into Owlman ?) This would, of course, let that controversial pair Mike and Sue (Persinger and Blackmore) into the cryptozoological garden, where they might not be welcome (9).

I can't leave without making an "out there" suggestion. The Russians have form in using their large inland bodies of water for experimental shenanigans. Remember that engineering *folie de grandeur* the Ekranoplan, the Caspian Sea Monster ? Or the germ warfare facility on an island in the middle of the Aral Sea, which then became a peninsula as the sea itself

shrank as a result of a scheme for growing cotton ? Could the Runan-Shah be a genetic experiment ? I think the most likely candidate, though, is a boring old sturgeon.

A tail piece… (sorry, couldn't resist it). In the fifteen years since the initial report, the Runan-Shah has become an online mermeme. There's a crude model of a mermaid on a beach, and a young woman swimming underwater to breathy music by a female vocalist (10). Borat in his mankini would be intensely aroused.

1983… A MERMAN I SHOULD TURN TO BE (JIMI HENDRIX)

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(1) "A new wave of sightings", *Paranormal Magazine* 48.50-55.

(2) www.Pravdareport.com/7945-amphibians

(3) sciencefocus.com/news/giant-2-metre-salamander-thought-to-be-world's-largest-amphibian

(4) mysteriousuniverse.org/2015/05/the-mysterious-giant-salamanders-of-northern-California

(5) https://insideecology.com/2018/10/02/frogs-and-toads-at-the-coast-salt-tolerance-in-amphibians

(6) digitalatlasofancientlife.org/ve/living-fossils/fishes

(7) https://www.enn.com/articles/43980-sturgeon-thunder; eu.postcrescent.com/story/sports/outdoors/fishing/2014/12/01/sturgeon-thunder-sound/19742887

(8) Susan Blackmore, *Dying to Live* (1993), p.205f.

(9) Speaking of a garden, Susan Blackmore would probably plant her potatoes in it. On her penchant for vegetable growing see *In Search of the Light: The Adventures of a Parapsychologist* (1996), p.126, 173.

(10) survincity.com/2012/07/mermaid-found-on-the-beach-in-the-Caspian-sea;

YouTube.com/watch?v=hvy3GI4aUGQ; reddit.com/Humanoidencounters/comments/eo86zd/mermaid_sightings_in_the_Caspian_sea

Letters and e-mails & Notes and Queries

E-MAIL FROM ULRICH MAGIN JANUARY 1ST 2020

Josephus, Antiquities, Book II, ch. 10

But Moses prevented the enemies, and took and led his army before those enemies were apprized of his attacking them; for he did not march by the river, but by land, where he gave a wonderful demonstration of his sagacity; for when the ground was difficult to be passed over, because of the multitude of serpents, (which it produces in vast numbers, and, indeed, is singular in some of those productions, which other countries do not breed, and yet such as are worse than others in power and mischief, and an unusual fierceness of sight, some of which ascend out of the ground unseen, and also fly in the air, and so come upon men at unawares, and do them a mischief,) Moses invented a wonderful stratagem to preserve the army safe, and without hurt; for he made baskets, like unto arks, of sedge, and filled them with ibes, 1 and carried them along with them; which animal is the greatest enemy to serpents imaginable, for they fly from them when they come near them; and as they fly they are caught and devoured by them, as if it were done by the harts; but the ibes are tame creatures, and only enemies to the serpentine kind: but about these ibes I say no more at present, since the Greeks themselves are not unacquainted with this sort of bird. As soon, therefore, as Moses was come to the land which was the breeder of these serpents, he let loose the ibes, and by their means repelled the serpentine kind, and used them for his assistants before the army came upon that ground.

http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D2%3Awhiston+chapter%3D10%3Awhiston+section%3D2

Letter from Richard George January 29th 2020

Ghosts and Pop/Rock

Dear Richard

I`ve found two more allegedly haunted rock `n` roll houses to add to my *Whale of a Tale* piece in FS 5/14. In 1973 Black Sabbath were rehearsing their Sabbath Bloody Sabbath LP at Clearwell Castle in the Forest of Dean when guitarist Tony Iommi saw a cloaked figure by the dungeons which disappeared mysteriously. This is from a piece Jonathan Tapsell wrote for *Paranormal* magazine in 2011 called "Ghosts go Pop!"

The other case is from *Mojo* 316. When Genesis were working on *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* at Headley Grange , a former poorhouse in Hampshire, guitarist Steve Hackett was convinced his room was haunted, describing noises he heard as "extraordinary". Led Zeppelin had also recorded there, and Jimmy Page claimed to have seen a "grey shrouded phantasm" on the stairwell. Peter Gabriel suggested occult activities by Page himself might have contributed to all this.

I enclose a photo of "Slipperman" .Peter Gabriel ,the Human Cryptid?

With best wishes,

Richard

Letter from Richard George February 26th 2020

Dear Richard

Photo of "bag squirrel" enclosed is from the Daily Telegraph, date above. (February 26th—R)

In fact, this may not be the first instance of squirrels using plastic in their dreys. In the blog of the Chicago Botanic Garden for December 6 2012, "Kathy J." describes seeing "green, shredded plastic like Easter basket grass" in a squirrel`s nest (my.chicagobotanic.org/nature-in-view/ecology/squirrel-drey-query).In response,some one else claims to have seen a drey containing chunks of foam from a bi-cycle seat.

In my own experience, a mother squirrel rasied young in our attic here in St Albans about thirty-five years ago,and its drey contained a cloth handkerchief. I`ve also seen a squirrel carrying in its mouth a discarded mitten.

Then again,maybe this is just a poor homeless squirrel evicted for not being able to pay its rent…

With best wishes,Richard

Letter from Richard George early March 2020

A couple of amusing things I`ve just found online:

· About a week ago some one posted footage of a Collared Peccary running down a suburban street: “Javelina caught speeding in Arizona” (14news.com/2020/02/25/watch-javelin-caught-speeding-Arizona)

· Staff at Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum allow peccaries to create artworks by smearing paint on their noses (“Peccary Picassos” - facebook.com/desertmuseum/videos/10154506981909315/). Only in the USA...

Letter from Richard George

Chipmunks in Britain and the Jackalope

Dear Richard

Glad you liked the Caspian cryptid article. These are a couple of things from my wonderful local Oxfam Bookshop. The first is a card made from a damaged edition of Beatrix Potter`s *The Tale of Timmy Tiptoes.*

The point is that this story features a chipmunk,not part of the traditional British fauna. I`ve looked online briefly and I can`t find any evidence of a cryptid population of the Siberian Chipmunk *tamias sibiricus* in the U.K in Potter`s time. So what is Chippy Hackee doing

in the dramatis personae?

It may just be artistic licence of course.Or maybe she knew some one who had a pet chipmunk.

Secondly...this Plastichrome postcard of a Jackalope, of unknown date,hales from the gloriously named Albuquerque in New Mexico (try spelling that after a few tequilas!) I believe this was Neon Park`s specific model on the Little Feat album cover.

I didn`t know that the Jackalope was supposed to sing at night,but you learn something every day.

With all good wishes,Richard

Strangers...from Siberia?

Coventry Evening Telegraph

June 20th 1970

Strange animals which dart in and out of a block of council flats at The Lindfield,Stoke Aldemoor,Coventry,have been worrying some of the tenants. At least two have been seen and,because it is feared that they will breed, a Corporation official has put a baited cage trap for them in the loft, where they seem to have made their home…"I`m scared of them" admitted Mrs Violet Gilmour,of flat No. 33. "They creep along the walls and through the long grass and look rather like rats to me"

She said she first saw one of the animals several weeks ago ,and that they had been very active during the warm weather. Mrs Pamela Lewin,who lives in a top flat,No. 23,said she had heard the animals "scratching around in the roof".

Another woman who has seen the animals is Mrs Grace Higson, of 15, The Lindfield.

Chipmunk`s over-run a Coventry area building

Coventry Evening Telegraph

July 3rd 1970

What and why are the little `squatters ` at Stoke?

By R.G.Harding

Those exotic little animals reported to be establishing squatters rights in a block of council flats at Stoke Aldermoor, Coventry,are still defying capture.Notwithstanding the efforts of a rodent operative (not my term) whose mouth fell open when given a description of them. I am told.

There is no resident zoologist at The Lindfield,so even the animals identity remains un-established though they are often seen. But the tenant,who,with commendable initiative,consulted his animal picture cards and decided that the denizens of the roof space must be Siberian chipmunks was probably not far wrong.

So why set out to trap such delightful and harmless creatures. Does officialdom reflect the all-too-common “if you don`t recognise it,shoot it” philosophy which is bred by fear?...

Siberian chipmunks

A schoolteacher who saw the picture a staff photographer took of “Alvin” when he obligingly ceased his scamperings for a second, thought he looked more like the animals she once reared and tamed as household pets in India. Whatever they are,might they survive an English winter or even some English summers?No-one can answer that for sure,but I have heard of pet chipmunks– and they are great escapologists—burrowing to breed successfully beneath an English

greenhouse.

Where might the black-and-white striped rascals at The Lindfield have come from? True it is that about 18 months ago there was a big importation of Siberian chipmunks as pets.

The schoolteacher called her former pets Indian squirrels and the British troops whose children she taught in the Punjab called them tree rats. Chipmunk or Indian squirrel—they are both of the same family and are not related to the rat.

I would echo her sentiments and make a European Conservation Year plea for the future wellbeing of the new "tenants" at The Lindfield...only I can`t help feeling they are quite capable of looking after themselves.

A follow up article appeared in the Coventry Evening Telegraph of July 13th 1970:

"The new "tenants" at The Lindfield, a block of council flats at Stoke Aldermoor, Coventry, are still going up the wall.

I mean the striped,squirrel-like creatures,believed to be chipmunks,which make daily appearances in and around the flats.By now,although everyone living at The Lindfield has grown used to the furry animals living in the roof-space,the latter continue to tread warily.

Although a pest control officer has been ringing the changes on the bait,using in turn nuts,cornflakes,bread and bran,they refuse to be lured into a cage trap which has been placed close to their home.

Newcastle Evening Chronicle Oct 6th 1993

Escaped chipmunk on the run

A FUGITIVE chipmunk with a taste for treats is on the run in a Northumberland town

The escapee is holed up in Cramlington where he's been spotted running down the road before diving into gardens where locals feed him nuts and other goodies.

He's believed to have escaped from captivity somewhere in the town and has set up his base in Underwood Grove.

The chipmunk, tamias striatus to those in the know, is now a daily regular in the back garden of George and Catherine Ellis after setting up home beneath a neighbour's shed.

"He first turned up about a month ago and he's forever up and down," said retired businessman George, 71.

Now Eric Morton, assistant keeper of biology at Newcastle's Hancock Museum, is working out a diet for the chipmunk to help him survive a Northumberland winter.

Tip for a French holiday:avoid chipmunks with Lyme disease

The Daily Telegraph July 26th 2016

"Families holidaying in France this summer will no doubt face many a pitfall—rain,queues for the ferry,hostile locals— but few will be prepared for a blight of disease-carrying chipmunks. British tourists heading for the French countryside are being warned to be wary of the animals,which can spread Lyme disease to humans...Siberian chipmunks became sought-after by a generation of youngsters after the release of the 2007 film *Alvin and the Chipmunks*.However many families released them into the wild after finding the animals can be vicious and prone to bite. Listed as an invasive species,they have flourished in wooded areas around Paris and the Versailles area. More than 10,000 were counted in the Senart forest to the south of the capital two years ago,and about 12 separate colonies are now established in France. The total number is estimated at more than 150,000…"

Folk Etymology of the word “efty”

I thought it was worth recording for posterity the etymology surrounding the word “eft” or “efty” meaning the British newt, or rather the newt inhabiting the British Isles. Though when this account was published originally in the Out of Doors and Countrygoer magazine of July-August 1953 it was much more common than it is today. This magazine came into the Oxfam shop where I work towards the end of 2019.

“...But Teddy Pearce,on this morning, was not after the big stuff. He was after efties. In case you do not know (but I expect that you do) efties are newts. We have all three sorts in our ponds: the great crested newt, the smooth newt and the palmated newt, known to Hampshire boys respectively as “warty eft”,”evat” and “baby evat". Hereabouts,and by most countrymen I daresay, the palmated newt is taken to be a small smooth newt, even a baby one perhaps, though they are, of course, distinct species. There is a bit of a problem about their names too. In general they are efties. One crested newt is a “warty efty”,and one smooth newt is an “evat". But two crested newts are two efties,not two “warty efties” ,and two smooth newts are two efties, not two “evats”. Anyway,no matter what they are called ,and they will all have difficult names in different parts of the country, the thing is to catch them…”

Thunderstorms and Ancient Monuments

Legendary History and Folklore of Stonehenge

L.V.Grinsell page 18

Survey stopped or interrupted by thunderstorm. The popular superstition that any sort of scientific study at an ancient monument would be followed by a thunderstorm was recorded in the mid 18th century by W.C.Borlase who had that experience while opening cairns known as the Giant`s Graves in the Isles of Scilly,and by the Bath architect John Wood,whose surveys at both Stanton Drew and Stonehenge were inter

- rupted by thunderstorms...which the local people attributed to these activities.

W I L S H I R E. 115
A. Saxa quæ vocantur Corſeſtones pondere 12 tonnarum
altitudine 24 pedes, latitudine pedes 7 ambitu 18.
B. Saxa quæ vocantur Cronekl. 6 vel 7 tonnarum.
C. Locus ubi oſſa humana effodiuntur.
B
C

Stonehenge from the Atlas van Loon (1645) Wikipedia Commons

The Stonehenge Bird Notes & Queries 8th series,11, 1897, page 324

THE STONEHENGE BIRD.—I copy the following interesting narrative from 'Ars Quatuor Coronatorum,' vol. vii. p. 189 (1894):—

"Whilst we were all assembled upon or near the Altar-stone, on Thursday, at daybreak of the 21st June, our attention was eagerly fixed upon the spot where the sun was momentarily expected to rise, a bird suddenly alighted on the point of the Gnomon; at such a moment the most trivial incident was subject for conversation, one brother remarking that the bird had the advantage of us from its exalted elevation, and possibly it had come to see the sun rise over the distant horizon; another saying that it would hinder the view of the first or extreme point of rising; after which some slight discussion followed as to whether it was a starling or a sparrow. However, it presently flew away, and the next moment we were gratified to see our majestic source of light rise directly over the point like a glorious disc of burnished copper, and amidst the general admiration of so grand a sight the small talk about the poor little bird was utterly forgotten. But much to the surprise of those who formed that advanced or 'sunrise' party, while enjoying the dessert and a cigar after dinner on the evening of the 22nd, Brother Piper of Ledbury, a learned antiquary and geologist, who had only joined our party during the day, said, 'And pray, brethren, did any of you by any chance happen to notice if a bird alighted on the Gnomon stone shortly before sunrise?' The few of us who had noted the apparently trivial incident of the morning looked most curiously at each other, and replied that we had, and that after furnishing us with some small talk it flew away the moment before the sun rose upon our line of sight, and we eagerly enquired of our genial and distinguished brother what bearing the case of our poor little bird had upon the subject. He replied 'Well, brethren, I cannot vouch for its accuracy, but an old legend runs that immediately before your great event on the longest day a bird perches upon that stone until it sees the sun rise over the brow of the distant hill, and then flies away, and throughout the whole of the rest of the year no bird is ever known to alight upon that stone. We were mightily interested with his strange statement, but as none of us live upon Salisbury Plain, and seldom visit it, we have no means of verifying it. As an interesting bit of folk-lore it has been deeply impressed upon our minds.—C. E. FERRY."

ST. SWITHIN.

Saved By A Dream

Bridport News - 28 September 1894 Page 8

“ A singular incident is reported from Appledore. A young girl sat up in bed reading, placing the candle on the bed. She fell asleep, and the candle ,turning over, caught the clothes on fire. A retired captain living near just at that time awoke from sleep, he having dreamt that the house in which the girl lived was on fire. Not feeling easy, he got up and went to the house, when it was found that the counterpane on the bed where the girl was asleep was on fire. He at once extinguished the flames. The girl had suffered from a few burns on the arms.

A Shower of Frogs

The Bolton Chronicle September 11th 1869

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BOLTON CHRONICLE

“Thinking that the following might be of interest to your numerous readers, I take it as a sufficient reason for encroaching upon your valuable time and space :- After a very heavy shower of rain on Sunday,the 5th inst at Reddish near Stockport,there were to be seen a large number of small frogs which made it difficult to proceed above a few paces without treading on some of them. Perhaps some of your readers could explain this occurrence. Yours, JOHN MARSDEN.Reddish,Sept 5th 1869.

Red tigers in India

Muirhead`s Mysteries blog of February 10th 2020

We are all familiar with the tiger with black stripes and yellow coat,however Dr Karl Shuker in his` Mystery Cats of the World` mentions a species of red tiger which is pallid,although Shuker does not give an exact geographical location for these tigers which are described as "red."(1) Perhaps there is no one location. However whilst I was reading a book titled `Big Snake.The Hunt for the World`s Longest Python` by Robert Twigger (Victor Gollancz 1999) the author makes the following comment about an eccentric character he knew called Colonel H and what seems like a genuinely red tiger.:

" In the old Oxfordshire house there were only two human statues(sic) Laughing Buddha and Saluting Man.Saluting Man was carved out of jackfruit tree wood by a Naga craftsman.He had a spear in one hand and saluted with the other and on his head was a hat made from the skin of a red tiger. (2)he WWF knew nothing about red tigers,but Colonel H insisted they lived deep in the jungles of the Naga Hills (in)"too far from a town for these environmental johnnies" .The red tiger is slightly smaller than the Bengal tiger and instead of having yellow and black colouring ,it is red and black. The hat on Saluting Man was a piece of aging tiger skin,reddish orange and black."(2)The Naga Hills are in north-east India on the border with Myanmar (Burma)

Strange Stories about Birds

From The Book of the Year 2019 by James Harkin et al pages 22-23

“ Residents on the isle of Jersey faced a feral chicken outbreak.Because there are no natural predators—such as foxes—on the island, pet chickens that had been abandoned were able to breed rapidly, forming gangs of up to 100 birds, which then took to stalking Jersey`s mean streets, causing traffic chaos and chasing joggers.

Three rogue geese terrorised the village of Upavon in Wiltshire. They formed a breakaway faction from a flock of 17 domestic geese and set up camp in a local square. Residents said they were `living in fear` as the birds attacked cars,bit locals and chased children off the school bus. The geese had previously been tagged,but unfortunately they were too violent for anyone to get up close and find out what the tags said.

Strange animal in Devon

Western Times October 31st 1870

Possibly a genet?

NEWTON

A STRANGE ANIMAL— “Mr Jacobs,naturalist,of this town, has preserved a strange animal that was shot in Bellarmarsh Covers a few days since by the Right Rev W.Clifford,Bishop of Clifton,who is one of a party of visitors at Ugbrook,the seat of the Right Hon Lord Clifford. In colour the animal is dark,spotted with black ,similar to a leopard, its head and fore quarters similar to a fox,and its hind quarters and feet resemble a cat. It had a tail 19 inches long,banded with rings of a dark colour;it also had very long

whiskers ,and measured from the tip of its nose to the tip of its tail 38 inches. The legs were short and stiff and about six inches in length. It is said to bear more resemblance to a gennet than any other animal."

Resembles a cat…

Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser

March 9th 1927

100 years ago in Taunton

"Mr M.Long,stationer,of this town, has in his possession a living animal whose head, fore legs and the greater part of its body resembles a cat. The hinder parts are similar to those of a rabbit. It was dug out of a hole in the hedge of a field at Norton,near this town, with a nest of young rabbits."

Fisherman saves deer out of its depth

The Times June 3rd 2020

"Jeremy Richards was about a mile out to sea when he first saw a strange shape bobbing in the waves. As he approached, it became apparent that the catch of the day would be unlike any before: his vessel had become a roe boat. Mr Richards, a sea captain from Porthleven,Cornwall, had seen a roe deer fawn paddling through the waves pursued by a large seal. After managing to catch the fawn with a fishing net, he took the animal onboard where it sat peacefully on the deck…"

Egg inside an egg

A Giant Egg

Date Unknown

"A giant egg has been laid at Sibson,near Wansford, Northants by a black Orpington hen, which measures 9 inches in circumference,7 1/2 inches from apex to base, and weighs 6 ounces."

Leprechaun in Ireland

A "Fairy" in Ireland

Lancashire Evening Post

April 20th 1908

"The Central News Dublin correspondent telegraphs:- Belief in the fairies or good people, is still entertained in many country districts of Ireland, and during the past few days the superstition has been strangely revived in North West Meath owing to a mysterious occurrence in the Killough District.It seems that a strange creature has been observed in the neighbourhood. Several persons, both adult and children, claim to have seen it, and describe it as a little man of dwarfish proportions, clad in red, with a small peaked cap. It is to be remarked that this is the traditional appearance of a Leprechaun, which is believed to vanish when anyone who sees it calls attention to it, but which, if anyone is fortunate enough to capture it, will, as a condition of its release, disclose hidden treasure to its captor, though if the latter turns his eyes off the Leprechaun, even for a moment, it will vanish with mocking laughter. "

Man eating apes in Burma during World War Two

Omaha World Herald November 3rd 1943

Burma`s Man Eating Apes Add Spice to Life of U.S. Officers in China

"With a Chinese Army,Northwestern Burma (U.P) United States army officers helping train Chinese troops sometimes have to battle Burma`s man-eating apes whilst cutting trails and building bridg-es...Two of the men, Maj Nevin F Wetzel,Salt Lake City,Utah and Lt John K.Jouett,New Orleans,La told of an encounter with apes when they returned to base November 1."

I ran into 15 of them one afternoon," Jouett said. "I killed a big bull with my automatic, and the rest of them left. The natives told me later that if the bull had time to call for help the others would have attacked."

There are two species of gibbons in Myanmar (Burma) but neither of them is thought to be man eating!

Letters to Fate magazine

Fate June 1954 volume 7 number 6 Issue 51

DISK-SHAPED TRACKS

Cosette Weiss

Las Cruces, New Mexico

“ On January 18 a lady friend and I made a trip approximately 35 miles southwest of here to an old extinct volcano crater called “Kilburne Hole” to collect some of the gem stones which are found in that locality .We arrived at the crater about 10.30am and as we climbed the high sand dune which surrounds the crater we discovered about 25 or 30 disk-shaped tracks in the sand.

They were of different sizes, the largest, about two feet in diameter. They were perfectly round and looked as if they had been made by something metallic. They consisted of four concentric rings with a sort of dot in the center. Jutting from one was a sort of arm with three or four claw-like hands. It was small, only about six inches long.

We made another trip to the crater on January 22 and found more of the same tracks. My lady friend reported the tracks to the Army at White Sands Proving Grounds and a man was sent to question us about them. The authorities will investigate the tracks in the near future.

We spent the entire day of January 18 at the crater, going in at the crater, going in at 10.30am and coming out at 4:00pm,and when covering all but one of them. So the ones we saw on January 22 were fresh.

Fate June 1954 volume 7 number 6,Issue number 51

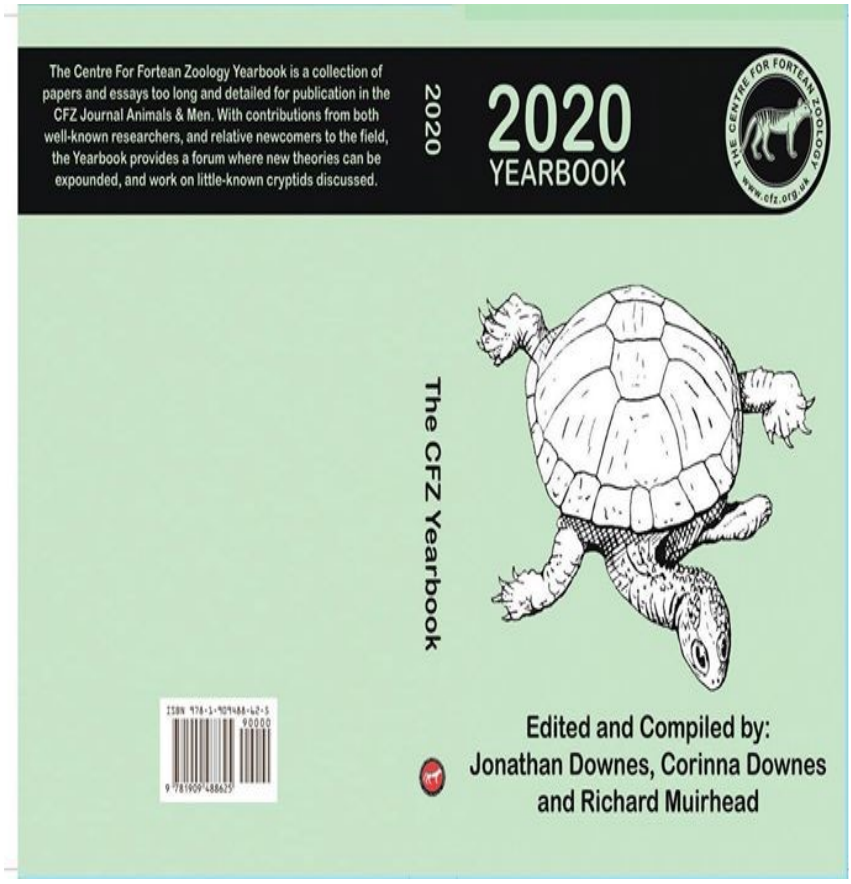
WHEEL IN THE SKY

Lillie Brown

Modesto, California

I never will forget an incident that happened in September.,1942.One Saturday afternoon my husband and my nine -year old grandson took a walk to my sister`s farm. My husband told me to be sure to lock up the garage that night. As I was closing the door I saw in the northeastern sky a beautiful wheel of all colors. The wheel seemed to be coming straight toward me and I noticed one spoke was missing.As it reached our back lot it turned, moved away and hovered for a minute over our neighbor`s house. Then it went north toward Modesto.

Next morning a lady told me that her brother`s wife died the night before. I had seen her at the store about 5:30 that evening. But after putting her two small children to bed she complained to her husband of feeling suddenly ill. When the doctor arrived she was dead. That was about 7:30—around the time I saw the wheel.


The Centre For Fortean Zoology Yearbook is a collection of papers and essays too long and detailed for publication in the CFZ Journal Animals & Men. With contributions from both well-known researchers, and relative newcomers to the field, the Yearbook provides a forum where new theories can be expounded, and work on little-known cryptids discussed.
2020
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